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Fishermen saved after boat sinks

YARMOUTH Four lobster fishermen were rescued early yesterday — the first day of lobster season — off the coast of Yarmouth from their sinking boat.

The crew of the Fundy Secret got onto a life-raft and radioed for help.

The Rescue Coordination Centre was preparing to send a Cormorant helicopter when a nearby fishing vessel picked the men up.

RACHEL BOOMER/
METRO HALIFAX

Celebrity Buzz pg 18



Manson in the past for Wood

Local pg 2

Sunken barge slowly leaking

Sports pg 11



Knotek living the good life

Education pg 12

Learning goes the distance



Police responded to Lockview High School in Fall River yesterday after two students reported to the school's administration that a student from another school had threatened to come to Lockview and shoot them.

Lockview lockdown

Fall River high school closes after hearing of gun threat

JENNIFER TAPLIN
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Lockview high school in Fall River was locked down yesterday after a threat of gun violence.

One girl, who isn't a student there, reportedly threatened two female students that she was going to shoot them at their school.

"It was the school that alerted the RCMP," said Shaune MacKinlay, spokeswoman for the Halifax Regional School Board. "The initial call came from a parent through the school."

When RCMP arrived just after 11 a.m., they shut down the driveway, said

"We have to treat this seriously until we can prove otherwise. We're trying to determine if she has access to a firearm."

RCMP Cpl. Joe Taplin

RCMP Cpl. Joe Taplin.

"We had officers in the school who located the two females who were threatened and took them into police protective custody," he said yesterday afternoon. "They'll remain with us until we turn them over to their family."

Police know the identity of the suspect, but they were still looking for the 16-year-old girl yesterday.

"We have to treat this seriously until we can prove otherwise. We're trying to determine if she has access

to a firearm," Taplin said. "Right now, we're still actively looking for the 16-year-old female who made the threat towards these two individuals."

When officials learned of the situation, the school was put into a "secure position," MacKinlay said.

"Shortly before the bell rang for lunch, they asked students to remain in their classrooms and any students in the hallways were told to report to a classroom or the cafeteria," she said.

Students who happened to be outside the building when the lockdown occurred were kept outside by the RCMP. The school was locked down for about 25 minutes before the risk was considered minimal.

Students responded very well to the announcement, MacKinlay said, probably because of so many emergency drills.

"They understood it was the kind of announcement to be taken seriously and they did what they were supposed to do."

The school day returned to normal, and parents were notified of the incident by a school messenger system that sends out voicemails to all the parents.

Simon Cowell's Il Divo includes Halifax stop on world tour

PHILIP CROUCHER
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MUSIC Il Divo is coming back to Halifax this spring.

The popular male operatic quartet has announced the dates for its world tour beginning in February, with Halifax serving as the first stop in North America on April 28 at the Metro Centre at 7:30 p.m.

Il Divo, which performed in Halifax before a sold-out audience of more than 8,000 in April 2007, will be touring for several months in support of its new album *The Promise*, which was released Nov. 19.

The group, created by American Idol judge Simon Cowell in 2004, will tour around Europe for six weeks then take two weeks off before starting shows in North America. Overall, there are 19 tour stops in Canada and the United States, including Montreal on Oct. 30, Toronto on May 5 and Vancouver on May 30.

Il Divo consists of American David Miller (tenor), Spain's Carlos Marin (baritone), France's Sebastien Izambard (pop singer) and Switzerland's Urs Buhler (tenor).

Tickets

• Tickets for the show go on sale Saturday at 9 a.m. with most seats costing either \$99.50 or \$135. Tickets can be purchased at all Ticket Atlantic locations, by phone at 451-1221 or online at ticketatlantic.com.



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Local



All kids equal when it comes to math

A new Statistics Canada survey of nine-year-olds released yesterday says there's little difference between boys and girls, or between low- and high-income children in math. Kids who had high school readiness scores at age five were better at math four years later than those who had lower scores at five. **METRO HALIFAX**

Sunken barge leaking oil into ocean

LINDSAY JONES

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A barge sitting on the ocean floor off the coast of Yarmouth is slowly leaking diesel, Environment Canada officials say.

Officials say about 3½ litres of diesel have seeped to the surface, forming a thin 1.6-kilometre by 15-metre sheen near where the Shovelmaster went down in rough seas Saturday.

Roger Percy, Environment Canada's manager of environmental emergencies, said it's unknown how much fuel is leaking.

"I don't want to downplay anything, but certainly I don't think it's a major incident," Percy said. "It's a very light oil that disperses very

readily."

The dredging barge, owned by J.D. Irving, was carrying 70,000 litres of diesel and some hydraulic oil when it sank 80 kilometres southeast of Yarmouth.

The vessel was under tow from Saint John to Halifax on Wednesday when it encountered severe weather. Three crew members had to be rescued by helicopter. A decision was made to cut the towing line and the vessel capsized. Three days later, the barge began to sink despite continued attempts to tow it.

Yesterday, officials from Environment Canada, the Canadian Coast Guard and Transport Canada met to decide next steps.

Government aircraft will monitor the waters for wildlife and any further

spillage for the rest of the week.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans issued a safety advisory on the first day of lobster season asking fishers to steer clear of the area where the vessel sank.

Joe LeClair, environmental response supervisor for the Canadian Coast Guard, said the barge owners are looking into various recovery scenarios, which could include removing the 600-tonne barge, taking out the oil or plugging any holes. So far, no options have been ruled out.

Transport Canada is investigating and has yet to determine whether the barge owners violated pollution laws under the Canada Shipping Act and Regulations.



An aerial shot of the Shovelmaster just before it sank.

News in brief

BLAZE A fire in an apartment building on Portland Street in Dartmouth left several people homeless last night. Around 5 p.m., fire crews responded to the building where the fire was contained to an apartment on the second floor. Everyone got out safely. Firefighters put out the flames in about 10 to 15 minutes. **METRO HALIFAX**

Correction

• A story on property-tax caps for apartment buildings that appeared in Friday's Metro contained an incorrect figure. Darcene Tannis's rent has twice increased by \$20 per month, not \$10. Metro apologizes for the error.

Consumer confidence riding high in region

JENNIFER TAPLIN

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Atlantic Canadians are still willing to make big purchases even in uncertain economic times.

A consumer confidence survey shows Atlantic Canadians are more optimistic than the rest of the country.

Consumer confidence levels in the country are at a decade low.

These kinds of numbers haven't been seen since the recession in the early 1990s, an economist says.

"Right now, we're at a level that's quite similar

"One positive thing is people seem to think that now is a better time to make a major purchase than the same time last month. Heading into the retail holiday season, that seems to be some good news."

Todd Crawford, economist

to the one we saw in the early '90s. In fact, we're within a per cent or two either way," said Todd Crawford, economist at the Conference Board of Canada.

Ours is the only region showing a slight increase in consumer confidence.

The monthly survey asked four questions: Two related to the respondents' financial situation, one to future employment in the community, and if now is a good time to make a major purchase.

"We see a lot of people

in Atlantic Canada think things will stay the same six months from now, so they don't see things getting worse."

This region typically answers these questions differently than the rest of the country, Crawford said. And Atlantic Canada hasn't been hit as hard as Ontario in the manufacturing sector, or as hard as western provinces with commodity prices.

"Obviously, Atlantic Canada has been struggling as well, but not to the degree where central Canada is, where confidence is at extremely low levels."

Low confidence levels aren't an indicator of recession, but it shows the economy is struggling. Crawford said it means this is something that needs to be watched carefully, especially if it continues to dip.

"One positive thing is people seem to think that now is a better time to make a major purchase than the same time last month. Heading into the retail holiday season, that seems to be some good news."

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Court martial starts for soldier charged with manslaughter

SYDNEY A military court martial began Monday for a Canadian soldier charged with manslaughter, criminal negligence causing death and negligent performance of duty in the death of a comrade in Afghanistan.

Cpl. Matthew Wilcox, 23, a member of the 2nd Battalion of the Nova Scotia Highlanders of Glace Bay, was charged in the death of Cpl. Kevin Megeney of Stellarton on March 6, 2007 when, according to news reports, a

single shot was fired from Wilcox's 9mm army-issued handgun while the two were alone in tent at Kandahar Airfield.

During court-martial proceedings Monday at the Victoria Park armoury in Sydney, military judge Commander Peter Lamont set dates in January, February and May for a number of pre-trial applications and June 1 for the start of the trial before a military panel.

THE CAPE BRETON POST

Keep your pets warm this winter, SPCA urges

It's time for Fluffy and Fido to come inside. The SPCA says most pets can't handle extremely cold temperatures and weather conditions. If you're going to leave an animal outside for more than 20 minutes at any time of year, the SPCA says, build a dog or cat house. **METRO HALIFAX**

Changes coming after 1,500-vehicle jam

Transportation Ministry plans to buy signs and hire emergency crew co-ordinator

PAUL MCLEOD

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After 1,500 vehicles were stranded on a highway overnight last week, the government is determined to keep such an embarrassing incident from happening again.

Many questions came out

of the traffic jam on the 104. Drivers wondered why they were still being allowed on the highway after the jam had started; firefighters wondered why they were never called to help.

The government is planning a series of moves to fix those problems, including buying electronic signs along the highway to up-

date drivers, and hiring someone to co-ordinate emergency crews.

"The signs could be several hundred thousand dollars. But if I learned one thing since last Wednesday, it's that it's incumbent upon us as the government and myself as minister to do whatever it takes to make it as safe as possible," said

Transportation Minister Murray Scott.

The changes come after a two-hour meeting held between government agents, RCMP, the Emergency Management Office and others.

Scott already appointed Bruce Langille as interim emergency co-ordinator Friday. Langille got an immediate test when another

storm hit Saturday. That day, Highway 104 was closed for close to 12 hours.

"It was absolutely the right decision. It was blizzard conditions and it was unsafe to drive through," said Scott. "The difference with this weekend was there was actually someone on site, on the ground to co-ordinate it."

Costs

- A consultant report at a cost of \$50,000 to \$60,000 will also be done, and the government will look into hiring winter staff Nov. 1 instead of Dec. 1.
- Murray Scott said less urgent projects may be delayed to pay for the added costs.

Dartmouth Skiing the green



Carl Purcell takes his cross-country skis for a spin at the Brightwood Golf and Country Club in Dartmouth yesterday.

Dangerous offender denied full, day parole

KAMIA CREELMAN
for Metro Halifax

CRIME Dangerous offender Andrew Paul Johnson, 48, originally from Halifax, has been denied both full parole and day parole. Johnson was declared a dangerous offender after kidnapping a 20-year-old mentally challenged woman in Nanaimo, B.C., in 1997.

"Your criminal history is fraught with violent and predatory behaviour on your part," three National Parole Board members wrote in a decision released yesterday.

Johnson lured the young woman into his car, saying he was a cop. He was driving into the woods when a real police officer spotted and approached the car. Earlier that day, Johnson had approached three 12-year-old girls who did not get into his car — so police were on alert.

A search of his car turned up a large meat cleaver, lubricant, a mask, pornography, toy handcuffs, packing tape, dark glasses, maps and beer cans.

Johnson is a self-proclaimed sex addict with a history of alcohol and substance abuse. His criminal history dates back to his 20s and includes stalking, abduction attempts, the rape of his girlfriend and public masturbation.

The board said Johnson has been considered a suspect in several murder cases, although he hasn't been charged in any. It concluded denying Johnson's parole is in the best interest of public safety.

Plans

- If released, Johnson had planned to move to Ontario to live with his sister and be a chef.

Bill to stiffen penalties for drunk driving likely on hold

DRIVING Nova Scotia is set to see tougher punishments for drinking and driving, but they likely won't take effect until after the Christmas season.

Currently drivers face charges if they drive with a blood alcohol level above .08, but face a 24-hour suspension between .05 and .08.

Now the government wants to extend the suspension to seven days on a first offence, 15 for a second and 30 for a third. Drivers must also pay a licence reinstatement fee of \$85.40.

"Impaired driving took the lives of 32 Nova Scotians in 2007," said Transportation Minister Murray Scott. "We know that driving at even a lower level of impairment poses significant risks."

Halifax Regional Police Chief Frank Beazley said 186 suspensions were given out last year. People can reach a .05 blood alcohol level with as little as two or three drinks. Beazley suggested a driver have no more than one drink.

The NDP and Liberals are likely to support the legislation, but they said there's almost no chance of it going through in this sitting of the house, which is expected to end as early as today.

NDP MLA Howard Epstein criticized the government for not introducing the bill earlier.

"At first blush, it has my endorsement. But if it's good legislation it should have been introduced much earlier," said Epstein.

PAUL MCLEOD/METRO HALIFAX

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Province passes HRMbyDesign plan

PAUL MCLEOD
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The controversial development plan HRMbyDesign was passed by the provincial legislature yesterday.

After more than an hour of debate, all but one MLA, Howard Epstein, voted in favour of the bill.

Halifax-Clayton Park MLA Diana Whalen said she voted for the plan because the status quo isn't working.

"Funds have gone to other cities and even other provinces because we haven't been responsive enough to move on projects that ultimately have been approved," said Whalen.

HRMbyDesign had largely been supported by the business community but opposed by heritage advocates for its restrictions and timelines on appeals and public hearings.

NDP MLA Epstein, the lone dissenter, seized on those concerns and delivered an impassioned speech against the bill, saying it hurt the democratic process.

"What this bill does is it invents some extraordinary land-use planning law tools that are designed to minimize public input and to undercut, in my view, the democratic participation by all citizens. And it's wrong," said Epstein.

HRMbyDesign will now be sent back to Halifax Regional Council, which will need to vote for it one final time for it to come into action.



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Poor also in poor health

National report links poverty with physical well-being

JENNIFER TAPLIN
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Poverty isn't good for your health.

A recent report shows impoverished people are in poorer health and therefore need more time in the hospital.

The Canadian Institute for Health Information picked 21 health indicators — like low birth weights and influenza immunization rates in seniors — to examine the health of people in 15 Canadian cities.

Gaynor Watson-Creed, medical officer of health for the Capital District Health Authority, said Halifax is on par with every other city when it comes to poverty's effects on the health of its citizens.

"For Halifax, just like the other cities, what it shows is that when you see low socio-economic status in our city, you also see worse health," she said in a



Gaynor Watson-Creed, medical officer of health for the Capital District Health Authority says a new report by the Canadian Institute for Health Information confirms that poverty is having a definite impact on people's health.

phone interview yesterday.

Diabetes, smoking, obesity and cardiovascular conditions all are more prevalent in poor people.

"The report is really highlighting there is a gap there between the health that is experienced by people in poverty and the

health that's experienced with people in relative affluence. The question is, how do we close that gap?"

Impoverished people often don't eat as well, don't access a family doctor as often and are less educated, but even those reasons don't fully explain why

poor people are also worse off health-wise.

"I think it's more complicated than that and I think the report is highlighting that we need to examine that deeper," Watson-Creed said.

Halifax in particular has high hospitalization rates for children with asthma. And impoverished children are in the hospital for asthma about twice as much as children in a higher socio-economic status.

"Not only do we have high rates of asthma, but we see much worse rates of asthma in children living in poverty," she said.

Now that they have the detailed health analysis of this report, they can bring the research to discussions on reducing poverty in Halifax, Watson-Creed said.

"I think the opportunity is to bring this new data and whatever else public health data we can to those tables to help further those conversations."

Canada has voted!

CONGRATULATIONS JOEL CHARLEBOIS

winner with his photo *Midnight Tram to Humber*.

His photo was voted best in Canada! Joel has won a *Nikon D700 DSLR & Nikon 24-70mm F2.8 Zoom Lens* (valued at \$4,988 CDN).

Other Canadian finalists (left to right): *Life Rushing By* ~ Lydia Macintosh • *Granville Island Market* ~ Bounkham Sengsavanh • *Soggy City* ~ Steven Lungley • *Toronto Breaks* ~ Steve Tunzi

Thanks for helping choose the top 5 Canadian photos that will go on to the global finals. A global jury chaired by Mario Delogu and including Canada's own Paul Wearing will deliberate over the top 5 entries from all twenty countries in the competition, and will select one international winner by December 3rd.

New lab to study air quality

A new environmental health lab opened in Halifax yesterday. Dr. Mark Gibson, a research scientist at the centre, says the lab will study sick-building syndrome and concentrations of volatile organic compounds in the air. **METRO HALIFAX**

Charities press on in tough times

EDANA ROBITAILLE
for Metro Halifax

Joanne Bernard is getting anxious about the holidays.

The executive director of Alice Housing, a charitable organization that provides housing for women leaving abusive situations, says things aren't as busy as they usually are this time of year.

"Christmas is a month away and we haven't seen it start yet," Bernard said. "We haven't had the phone ringing and people dropping off financial donations."

She blames much of it on the economic downturn, saying people aren't as willing to donate their money.

But not all charities are having that problem. Roxanne Robinson, executive director for mainland Nova Scotia Christmas Daddies, is optimistic about this year's telethon.

Donations have gone up by about \$270,000 from 2004. Robinson says the success is because the show has been going for



Alice Housing executive director Joanne Bernard, seen at the organization's headquarters in Dartmouth, says she's seen a dropoff in donations this year compared to previous years.

so long and is steeped in tradition.

She says giving is especially important this year.

"Maritimers are generous, and they always step up when others are in need

of help," Robinson said. "This is no time to be shy."

Bernard says with the economic outlook as bleak as it is, there are a lot of people who will need help. Many are going to be out of

work, and this creates tension in some homes. People will need a helping hand more than ever, which increases the demand for charitable organizations.

HRM braces for financial crisis

LINDSAY JONES
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ECONOMY Halifax is getting its books in order to deal with the world economic crisis.

City staff will present a report to council tonight outlining potential impacts of the financial crunch.

Staff point out that property and deed-transfer taxes are some of the city's main sources of revenue, and if properties lose their value, that's less cash for the city.

But there's hope a predicted 3.9 per cent drop in homes sold could be offset by a predicted 3.1 per cent jump, according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp.

"We've got the price of

oil going down, so we're saving some money there," said Paul Fleming, HRM's manager of budget and financial analysis.

While he said there's no prediction of a deficit for this budget year, it's hard to say what will happen three years from now.

Like many other pension plans, Fleming said the city's pension fund is also being closely monitored.

Under proposed government solvency rules, employees and the city may have to contribute more.

"It would require us to put in a huge amount of money or cut our benefits," Fleming said. "That strikes me as not very sensible."

The city has been lobbying the province to be exempt from the rules.

SMU squad wins stock challenge

CONTEST A team of four students from Saint Mary's University won the Atlantic Canada Chartered Financial Analyst Society Investment Research Challenge last weekend at Saint Mary's.

The challenge had the students make stock recommendations about an ac-

tual company.

The team will go on to the North American regional challenge in New York.

Last year, UNB, the Atlantic Canadian winner, finished second in the world.

EDANA ROBITAILLE/
FOR METRO HALIFAX

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PARIS

Bank of Canada deputy governor Sheryl Kennedy will step down as of Dec. 1 to "pursue other interests," the central bank announced yesterday. The bank said it will launch a recruitment process shortly to fill her position. **REUTERS**

Canada



Canadian youth top U.S. in net use

Fewer young Americans have Internet access than their peers in Canada, a survey of 13 countries around the world showed. Among 12- to 14-year-olds, 100 per cent of British youth use the Internet, followed by Israel at 98 per cent, the Czech Republic and Macao at 96 per cent, Canada at 95 per cent and the U.S. at 88 per cent, according to the World Internet report by the Center for the Digital Future.

REUTERS

Tories accused of big spending

The Conservative government should be "embarrassed" after a Torstar investigation showed that federal politicians and public servants are travelling at high-class prices on the taxpayers' dime, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation says.

"(Prime Minister Stephen Harper) and his cabinet should be embarrassed that it has been caught at the trough like everyone else they accused of being (when the Conservatives were in opposition)," federation spokesperson Kevin Gaudet said yesterday.

The investigation looked at about 60,000 travel records from four years, including the last two years of Paul Martin's Liberal government and the first two years of the Conservative government. Both Liberals and Tories have

Tory spending

- The standout expenses included an \$84,000 trip to WTO talks in Geneva and a \$61,000 trip to the United Nations climate-change conference in Bali last year.

been big spenders, but the analysis found most Tory ministers spent more than the Liberals they once accused of being lavish spenders. In a detailed comparison it was found Tory ministers outspent the Liberals in 10 out of 12 cases. **TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE**

Hungary Official welcome



Hungarian President Laszlo Solyom welcomes Governor General Michaëlle Jean, left, in the terrace of the Presidential Palace in Budapest yesterday. Jean is on a five-day official visit to Hungary for trade relations.

KAROL ANKAL/REUTERS

Olympic security costs soaring

ESTIMATES The cost of providing security for the 2010 Winter Olympics in Vancouver will be almost three times the initial estimate, in part due to planning mistakes by the Games organizing committee, it was reported yesterday.

The total cost would be around \$500 million, almost three times higher than the initial estimate of \$175 million.

An official announcement on the higher costs is expected in the next few weeks from the Olympic committee. **REUTERS**

Commuters pressured to e-mail in car: Poll

KRISTEN THOMPSON
Metro Canada



WORK Commuters are becoming increasingly dependent on mobile technology like BlackBerrys and iPhones to keep up

with work on their way to and from the office.

But that need to stay connected is coming at the expense of our safety with many people texting behind the wheel, according to a new Angus Reid study. The Commuting And

Staying Connected omnibus found that 23 per cent of Canadians surveyed said they need to have access to text messaging, phone and e-mail while commuting. Ontario is expected to ban the practice soon.

News in brief

WAR Gen. Walt Natynczyk, Canada's chief of defence staff, praised Washington yesterday in its plans to deploy 20,000 more troops to Afghanistan.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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5 million in U.S. go to alcohol, drug self-help groups

About five million Americans attend meetings of self-help groups like Alcoholics Anonymous for alcohol and drug abusers, and nearly half of them reported remaining clean, a federal study released yesterday showed. **REUTERS**

World/Business

Costly stimulus needed: Obama

President-elect Barack Obama promised yesterday to jolt the faltering U.S. economy with a costly stimulus package next year and introduced the team that will help him navigate the global financial crisis.

Obama, who warned again that the economy would likely get worse before it got better, declined to put a price tag on the two-year stimulus proposal that other Democrats have estimated at hundreds of billions of dollars.

White House appointments

Barack Obama confirmed his economic team at a news conference.

- Timothy Geithner, president of the New York Federal Reserve Bank, will be treasury secretary.
- Lawrence Summers, a former treasury secretary, will be director of the National Eco-

nomie Council.

- Christina Romer, a University of California, Berkeley, economics professor, will head the Council of Economic Advisors.
- Melody Barnes, a former chief counsel on the Senate Judiciary Committee, will head the Domestic Policy Council.

The scope of the economic crisis has widened in the 20 days since Obama's White House win. Au-

to companies warned they were short on cash, unemployment numbers rose and the government inject-

ed \$20 billion into Citigroup.

"These extraordinary stresses on our financial system require extraordinary policy responses," Obama said, adding his administration would honour public commitments made by President George W. Bush's team to address this crisis.

Obama said his team was already working on the details of a package to save or create 2.5 million needed jobs.

REUTERS

Business

Citi bailout keeps BCE buyout alive

With the clock ticking toward a Dec. 11 closing deadline, the \$52-billion US buyout of BCE Inc. appeared to dodge yet another bullet this week after Washington moved to bail out Citigroup Inc., the deal's biggest financial backer.

Shares of BCE soared nearly 10 per cent, or \$3.39, to \$37.94 yesterday on the Toronto Stock Exchange after the U.S. government said a day earlier that it would shield Citigroup from hundreds of billions in losses from toxic assets by injecting \$20 billion US of capital into the bank.

Investors in the Canadian phone giant had become concerned about the deal's chances last week as

the spectre of bankruptcy was raised at Citigroup.

Such an outcome could put in jeopardy the bank's commitment to funding the \$42.75-per-share takeover of BCE by the Ontario Teachers' Pension Plan.

Citibank is estimated to be contributing between \$11 billion and \$13 billion of the deal's \$32 billion in financing.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Swift-action plan

- U.S. president-elect Barack Obama said he has high hopes for Congress to act quickly "so that our administration can hit the ground running. We cannot hesitate and we cannot delay," he told a news conference.

REUTERS

B.C.'s surplus less than expected

ECONOMY British Columbia's projected budget surplus has dropped by more than half because of the slower U.S. economy and lower personal income tax revenue, provincial officials said yesterday.

The \$450-million surplus was short of the \$1-billion surplus that financial officials had projected in September.

REUTERS

In brief

EARNINGS Royal Bank of Canada said its fourth-quarter revenue would fall 15 per cent to \$1.1 billion on trading losses, while TD Bank will sell \$1.2 billion in common stock after disclosing \$350 million in credit-trading losses in the quarter.

LOSS Royal Bank of Canada said yesterday it expects quarterly net income to drop 15 per cent to \$1.1 billion due to credit losses and the effects of the global downturn. **REUTERS**

India Acrobats take flight



Chinese acrobats perform during an India-China cultural exchange program in the eastern Indian city of Kolkata yesterday. The program was organized by the Indian Council for Cultural Relations and Chinese Embassy to strengthen the cultural bonds between the two countries.

Some breast cancers might naturally regress, says study

HEALTH Researchers who tracked breast-cancer rates in Norwegian women proposed the controversial notion yesterday that some tumours found with mammograms might otherwise naturally disappear on their own if left undetected.

But leading cancer experts expressed doubt about the findings and urged women to continue to get regular mammograms, saying this screening technique unquestionably saves lives by finding breast cancer early on.

REUTERS

Somali pirates drop ransom for Saudi oil tanker to \$15M

PIRACY Somali pirates holding a Saudi supertanker after the largest hijacking in maritime history have reduced their ransom demand to \$15 million US, an Islamist leader and regional maritime group both said yesterday.

The Nov. 15 capture of

the Sirius Star — with \$100 million of oil and 25 crew members from Britain, Poland, Croatia, Saudi Arabia and the Philippines — has focused world attention on rampant piracy off the failed Horn of Africa state.

REUTERS

Retailers Holiday sales lure



A free personalization promotion is seen inside a holiday-themed store in New York City yesterday. Facing bad economic news as the holiday shopping season approaches, small independent retailers and boutiques are adjusting strategies and inventories to lure customers away from the major chains.

SHANNON STAPLETON/REUTERS

News in brief

BAN California's gay marriage ban could open the door to legal discrimination against unpopular groups if the state Supreme Court allows the voter-approved measure to stand,

other minorities said.

BRAZIL Rescue workers rushed to help stricken residents in southern Brazil yesterday after landslides and floods caused

by heavy rain killed at least 59 people and forced more than 43,000 from their homes.

IRAQ A bomb blast killed 13 female government employees

on a bus on their way to work in Baghdad yesterday, and a female suicide bomber killed five people outside Baghdad's Green Zone compound, police said.

REUTERS

Interest rates/Savings accounts
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business 9

Your Money

EDITOR: NINA DRAGICEVIC, NINA.DRAGICEVIC@METRONEWS.CA

SmartCookies



Going for broke(r)

If you are considering, even months or years from now, purchasing real estate, then the first person you should be talk-

ing to is a mortgage broker. Simply put, mortgage brokers help you find the best rates on mortgage products available at all fi-

nancial institutions.

What's more, they have the knowledge required to present a proposal for financing to a lender (bank)

in the best way possible to successfully obtain your mortgage and deal on your behalf with all potential

lenders. Mortgage brokers represent you and not the lender and they come at a price tag that even surprised us: Free, in most cases! Mortgage brokers basically are paid their commission from the institution you end up using as your lender.

When you begin the process of searching for property it is essential to know what you can afford. However, just because you have been approved for a specific amount does not mean you need to take that full amount. Be sure that the mortgage amount and the monthly payments fit into your long term financial plan.

Here are a few Smart Cookie tips:

Referrals:

Having a referral from a friend, acquaintance or family member is great when trying to find a mortgage broker. Buying a property doesn't always happen overnight, so you could be in this relationship for some time and it's best to find a good fit.

Commissions:

Ask your mortgage broker on what basis they make their recommendations. Mortgage brokers are paid commissions to sell loans, so make sure you ask plenty of questions about the commissions they are paid.

Research:

Do your own research via the Internet and phone. Ask what deals mortgage brokers have to offer and if there are any conditions attached. Remember, this home loan is likely to be part of your life for years to come so don't be afraid to ask tough questions.

Stick With Your Gut:

Make sure you feel confident about the person who is organizing your mortgage. Go with your gut on this one — if something doesn't feel right, chances are it isn't.

E-mail questions or comments to smartcookies@metronews.ca.

Tune in Wednesday night at 9 p.m. EST/PST on the W Network and be sure to visit smartcookies.com for more tips.

Investing

Allan Small

The week's column looks at ways to invest for growth while keeping your principal safe. Visit metronews.ca

Ontario couple seeks rebate for land taxes

MoneyMatters



Q Three weeks ago, my wife and I purchased our first home. We close two days before Christmas. Our down payment is minimal and therefore has very little for closing cost. Every dollar will matter. Do we qualify for the Ontario land-transfer tax rebate?

Cole and Jen, Ontario

A Congratulations! Very few accomplishments are as satisfying as owning your first home. Although real estate prices have declined, it continues to be a great investment over the long term and the next several months will have many more opportunities for first-time and non-first-time buyers alike.

Land-transfer taxes (LTT) can be a rude awakening for many purchasers in large Canadian cities, particularly unprepared, first-time buyers. Land transfer taxes are assessed on transfer of property in Ontario and are required to be paid by the purchaser. LTT is based on the value of the property at rates between one to two per cent. On a home of \$400,000, the LTT would be in excess of \$4,000. Unfortunately, that is not the end of bad news. An additional equal amount of LTT for Toronto homes is expected. That's a whopping \$8,000, just for Ontario and Toronto LTT. The following may help you:

- First time buyers may qualify for an Ontario LTT rebate up to \$2,000 on purchases of newly constructed homes. Resales are disqualified.
- First-time buyers may al-

so qualify for a Toronto LTT rebate up to \$3,725 purchases of resale or newly constructed homes.

- Must be at least 18 years old (citizenship not required) and home must

be owner-occupied no later than nine months after closing.

- Purchasers (including spouse) must not have previously owned a home anywhere in the world.

You should check with your real estate lawyer to resolve before closing.

Henry Choo Chong, CGA, provides professional accounting and taxation solutions: choochonghcg@yahoo.ca.

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A U.S. federal judge has dismissed several charges against Barry Bonds, but has left intact most of the indictment alleging he lied to a grand jury about taking performance-enhancing drugs. The ruling yesterday paves the way for Bonds to go to trial in March. **METRO NEWS SERVICES**

Sports

SPORTS@METRONEWS.CA



Sign of the times

General Motors has ended its nine-year endorsement deal with Tiger Woods amidst the auto industry's worst economic climate in decades. The endorsement deal, believed to be worth at least \$7 million US a year, was to expire at the end of 2009. Woods has endorsed GM products around the world and mainly has been seen in Buick commercials.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Leafs trade for Stempniak

NHL Toronto GM Cliff Fletcher, in what may well be his last move as an NHL general manager, yesterday traded for St. Louis winger Lee Stempniak, sending defenceman Carlo Colaiacovo and forward Alex Steen to the Blues in exchange.

Fletcher said he didn't have to take the proposed trade to the Leafs' board of directors for approval, but given the unusual circumstances around the team, he bounced the idea off the team president before

pulling the trigger.

"I did bring to Richard Peddie's attention what was available to us. Whether the timing was good or bad, it was available now and we had to make a move one way or the other. I was told to go ahead and do my job," said Fletcher.

Peddie, in explaining why a major lineup renovation was approved before the new contractor is hired, stated simply: "Cliff Fletcher is our GM until he isn't."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

O'Byrne's gaffe costs Habs

NHL RESULT

Islanders 4 Habs 3 (SO)



Montreal defenceman Ryan O'Byrne scored into his own net on a third-period delayed penalty to send the game to overtime, and Bill Guerin scored the clincher in the shootout to give the New York Islanders a stunning 4-3 victory over the Montreal Canadiens last night.

With Montreal holding a 3-2 lead in the third period, Sean Bergenheim was whistled for holding and Carey Price left the Montreal net for an extra attacker.

The puck went into the Canadiens' end and O'Byrne, while being pressured by Doug Weight,

passed the puck back to no one and it slowly rolled into the net. Guerin was ultimately credited for the goal at 15:13 that made it 3-3.

O'Byrne did not see the ice again after the goal on his own net, and parts of the sellout Bell Centre crowd of 21,273 chanted his name in derision as the Habs filed off the bench toward their dressing room.

In the shootout, Price stopped Hunter, but was beaten by Richard Park and Guerin, while on the other end Pictou County's Joey MacDonald stopped Andrei Kostitsyn and Alex Tanguay.

MacDonald stopped 23 shots in the game.

Steve Begin, Josh Gorges and Maxim Lapierre scored for the Canadiens, who have lost three of four. Price allowed three goals on 24 shots in the loss.

METRO NEWS SERVICES



The Islanders' Mark Streit grabs Andrei Kostitsyn during last night's 4-3 New York win in Montreal.

Nash a New York kind of guy

YorkReport

Marty York

marty.york@metronews.ca

B.C. native **Steve Nash** — the finest Canadian basketball player in history — will eventually become a member of the **New York Knicks**.

That's the word around the NBA, and it's being spread like wildfire by league sources who know their stuff. They predict Nash will be with the Knicks before 2010. Makes sense, too. Nash already has an off-season home in New York. He plays in a Manhattan soccer league during the off-season. And he has gone on record as saying New York would satisfy his cultural interests and foster his filmmaking desires.

There's also the fact that **Mike D'Antoni** is the new Knicks

coach and used to be Nash's coach in Phoenix, where the point guard and the Suns excelled in a fast-paced system that is being introduced these days in New York.

And, oh yes, the Knicks made two trades last week that cleared \$27 million US in their salary cap.

• A Knicks team featuring Nash, of course, likely would make life more miserable for

their Eastern Conference rivals, including Canada's NBA franchise.

Despite starting the NBA's tallest frontline in 6-foot-11 **Jermaine O'Neal**, 6-foot-10 **Chris Bosh** and 7-foot **Andrea Bargnani**, the Raptors have been playing subpar ball and languish near the bottom of their conference with a below-.500, 6-7 record.

And some of the same folks who are whispering about Nash's future in New York are buzzing about what they perceive as the likely firing of Raptors coach **Sam Mitchell** before the all-star break.

Indeed, Mitchell has been getting outsmarted by opponents too frequently this season and it's making NBA types believe they were bang-on a few years ago, when they voted him the league's worst coach in a **Sports Illustrated** poll. Not that Mitchell is entirely to blame for the Raps' woes. Club boss **Bryan Colangelo** also needs to take some heat, for a change. The Raps have virtually no depth — and that's his fault.

Marty York has been a groundbreaking sports columnist and broadcaster in Canada for decades.

Luongo listed as week-to-week

NHL Vancouver Canucks goaltender Roberto Luongo has been termed week-to-week due to an adductor strain in his groin.

With 15:06 left in the first period in Saturday's victory over the Pittsburgh Penguins, Luongo made a pad save, but immediately fell down to the ice and could not get up.

Luongo had a career-long shutout streak earlier in the season, going 242 minutes, 36 seconds without allowing a goal.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

Sports in brief

BASEBALL Pitchers Rinku Singh and Dinesh Kumar Patel became the first Indian-born players to sign a professional sports contract outside of the country when they inked deals with the Pittsburgh Pirates yesterday. Singh, a 20-year-old left-hander who was born in Bhadoni, Uttar Pradesh, India, is the youngest of nine children in his family. Patel, a 19-year-old right-hander, comes from a family of five brothers and sisters.

NBA After a dismal 1-10 start to the season, the Washington Wizards fired head coach **Edie Jordan** yesterday and replaced him on an interim basis with **Ed Tapscott**.

METRO NEWS SERVICES

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Boudreau to enter AHL Hall of Fame

Former Nova Scotia Oilers centre Bruce Boudreau has been selected for induction into the American Hockey League Hall of Fame in 2009. Boudreau, head coach of the Washington Capitals, spent two seasons in Halifax and stands 11th in AHL history with 799 career points. **METRO HALIFAX**

sports **11**

Tomas Knotek has nine goals and nine assists in 17 games and is tied for the team points' lead.

Knotek steps out of Voracek's shadow

MATTHEW WUEST
matthew.wuest@metronews.ca

It turns out there is life — a very good life — after Jakub Voracek for Halifax Mooseheads centre Tomas Knotek.

The 18-year-old was virtually attached to Voracek at the hip last season, as the two Czech Republic natives lived with billet families just five doors apart in Cole Harbour.

Knotek, the rookie, and Voracek, an MVP candidate who had already been in Halifax for a year, were linemates for most of the season and best friends off the ice.

"Last year, we had Jake, and a lot of other skilled players and four lines could score goals," Knotek said. "This year, it's harder, and I was wondering if I'd score points without Jake."

Turns out, Voracek was a pretty decent mentor. His protégé has seized control of the offensive reins for the Herd, tied for the team lead in scoring with nine goals and nine assists for 18 points in 17 games heading into tonight's 7

MacMillan on the mend; Dunn leaves town

Halifax Mooseheads star Logan MacMillan returned to the ice yesterday, skating by himself before a team practice. MacMillan has already been out for a month with a knee injury and is at least a week away from returning to the lineup.

In other Mooseheads' news, free-agent blue-liner George Dunn is returning to the Ontario junior B ranks after a brief tryout in Halifax. The 18-year-old has been added to Halifax's 50-man protected list and is eligible for recall.

p.m. showdown with the Saint John Sea Dogs at the Metro Centre.

His line, with veteran left-winger Yuri Chernetiev and rookie right-winger Jessyko Bernard, has combined for 17 goals and 34 points in a sizzling nine-game stretch.

Knotek said he was eager to face the challenge after Voracek graduated to the Columbus Blue Jackets.

"We grew up together, I knew him for 15 years, and we were best friends," he said. "He helped me a lot, but I was excited to be here alone. I knew the team, I knew the language."

The six-foot-one, 172-pounder is now Halifax's primary offensive weapon along with Chernetiev and injured Logan MacMil-

lan, and is thriving with added responsibility.

"So many guys left, and somebody had to take leadership," Knotek said. "That's us. It's supposed to be us; it should be us."

A big reason Knotek came to Halifax was to improve his stock for June's NHL draft. When he wasn't picked, he received two phone calls; one from the Minnesota Wild, inviting him for a free-agent tryout; the other, from his pal Jake.

"He said, 'Just be positive and have a good season ... You don't have to be drafted to play in the NHL,'" Knotek recalled. "So I'm staying positive, I'm working hard to have a good season, and we'll see what happens after that."

QMJHL suspends another Roy

QUEBEC Hockey Hall of Famer Patrick Roy has another son in hot water with the Quebec Major Junior Hockey League.

Forward Frederick Roy of the Quebec Remparts was suspended for 15 games yesterday for cross-checking an opponent in the head and for delivering a blow to the

face of another player in an 8-2 loss to the Montreal Junior on Friday.

Frederick's older brother, goalie Jonathan, made national headlines in March for attacking an opposing puck-stopper, earning a seven-game suspension plus a \$500 fine.

The 17-year-old Frederick

is a five-foot-nine, 144-pounder with 13 points and 28 penalty minutes in 25 games.

Patrick Roy, whose No. 33 jersey was retired by the Montreal Canadiens on the weekend, is the head coach, general manager and part-owner of the Remparts.

MATTHEW WUEST/METRO HALIFAX

Rainmen sign SirValiant

MATTHEW WUEST
matthew.wuest@metronews.ca

BASKETBALL If SirValiant (Val) Brown is still as good as he was in college, the Halifax Rainmen may have uncovered a gem.

The Rainmen signed the six-foot-one point guard yesterday, bringing in a 27-year-old who once finished second in NCAA Division 1 scoring as a freshman at George Washington.

"There ain't nothin' he can't do," raved Rainmen co-owner Andre Levingston, who is quick to reference a 10-minute ESPN feature/highlight reel of Brown on Youtube.

"The one thing we lacked last year was an assassin at the guard position. We didn't have that.

"The first thing they said to me was, 'That kid was the one.' The Raptors said, 'If you can get that kid to buy into your system, he's going to be a star.'"

Andre Levingston

He gives us that."

Brown made headlines in 1999-2000 when he burst onto the college scene and averaged a stunning 24.6 points per game. He left after his sophomore year — some say on poor advice — to enter the NBA draft. He wasn't picked.

He has since floated around the pro ranks in North America and Europe, including a brief D-League stint.

Levingston said Brown might be in the NBA today if he had stayed in college

longer. He said some among the management staff of the Toronto Raptors and New York Knicks agree.

"The first thing they said to me was, 'That kid was the one,'" Levingston said. "The Raptors said, 'If you can get that kid to buy into your system, he's going to be a star.'"

Levingston, who has 12 players signed for Halifax's January debut in the Premier Basketball League, plans to bring at least 14 players to training camp starting Dec. 2.



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METRO NEWS SERVICES

SPECIAL FEATURES EDITOR: STEPHANIE BOMBA, STEPHANIE.BOMBA@METRONEWS.CA

Distance learning on the rise

More grads, mature students looking to brush up on skills while working full-time

BRIAN TOWIE
brian.towie@metronews.ca

Bad times in the economy may mean good times for continuing education, especially in distance-learning programs.

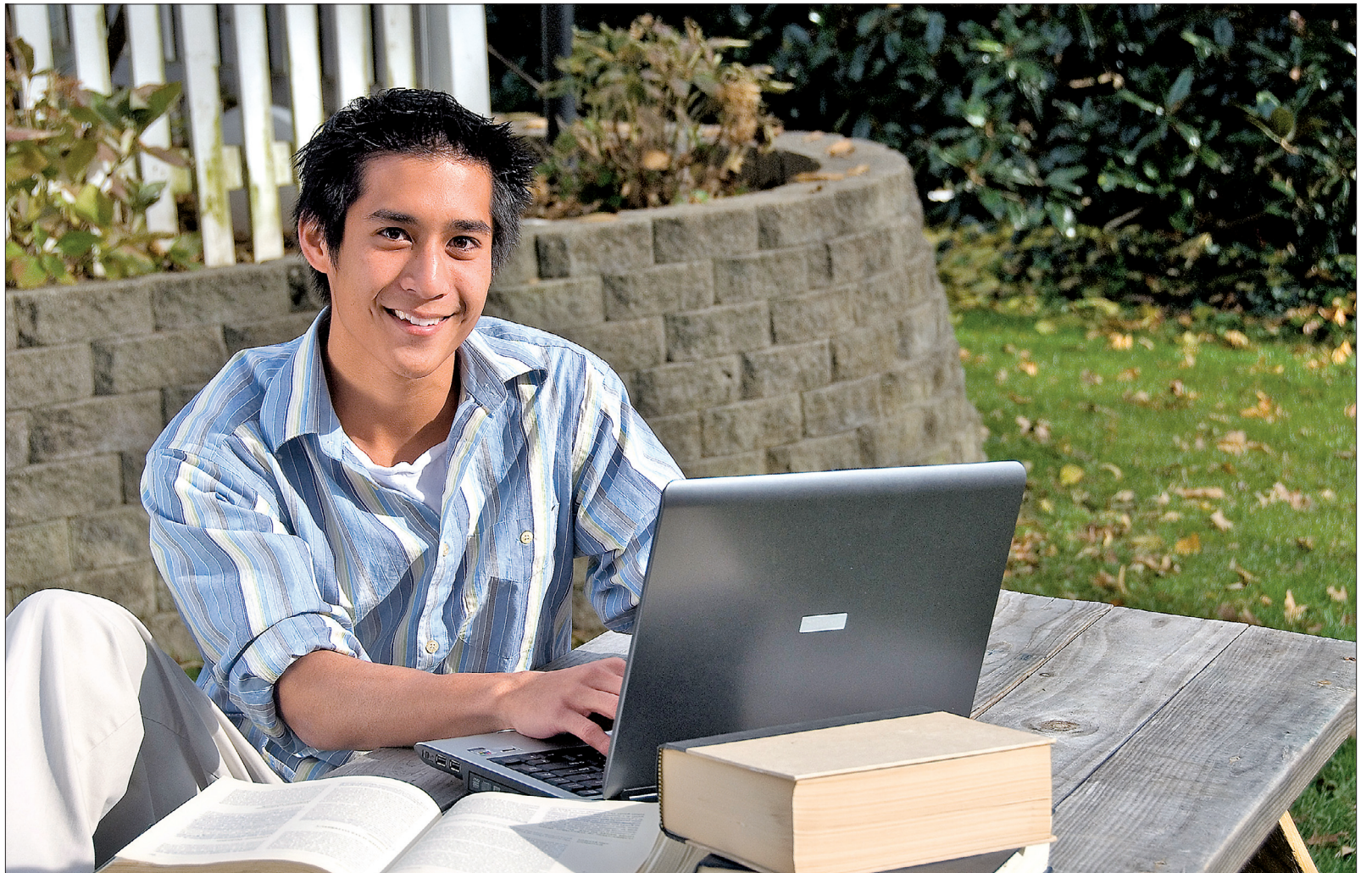
More graduates and mature students are turning to distance-learning courses in lieu of the classroom as a way to brush up on their skills while working or tending to a family full-time.

Some institutions have seen significant growth: Memorial University of Newfoundland, for example, reported an overall 13.1 per cent increase in collective distance-education registrations since 2007.

That's not much of a surprise to John O'Brien, manager of media relations at Athabasca University, a school that has made distance learning its stock in trade since 1970. When job prospects darken, he says, people often return to school to develop new skills.

"Bad times can be busy times for us," he said. "Perversely, as the economy falters and more people are either laid off or underemployed, we do notice that our business — and this is not a good way to put it because that's not what we're here for — goes up."

The flexibility of distance education, be it online or by snail mail, is a major attraction for those who don't have the time



When job prospects darken, people often return to school to develop new skills — and distance learning is a popular way to do just that, experts say.

to sit in class, O'Brien says. Unemployed or underemployed mature students, possibly living in rural areas with little or no access to a post-secondary institution or parents who must devote time to raising their kids, may find getting an education at their own pace a viable option.

"What distance-learning students can also do is apply their courses towards credit for already existing courses at universities across the country," O'Brien adds.

The current financial downturn may increase enrolment numbers the longer it lasts. The Sloan Consortium, an online

tracker of learning trends in the U.S., conducted a survey that found some 3.94 million students enrolled in at least one online course in the fall of 2007 in that country, an increase of 12.9 per cent from the previous year. According to most respondents in the survey, worsening employment oppor-

tunities contributed to the growth.

In Athabasca's case, graduate registration rates rose by 5.6 per cent between the 2003-04 school year and 2007-08. O'Brien notes this is a double-edged sword: Revenue increases for schools offering distance-learning programs, but so do the costs of operating

them and adapting them to a changing economy.

As classes grow — especially in open-university courses that require no previous requirements — more resources are needed to handle the volume of students.

"We don't want to see the economy tank," he added.

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Opening eyes to the Arctic

JON TATTRIE
for Metro Canada



Southerners tend to treat the north as a giant freezer where we keep our natural resources, but it's a vibrant, beautiful and culturally fascinating region, says Dr. Trudy Sable of Saint Mary's University in Halifax.

Sable teaches The Arctic Culture Area, an online course offered in co-operation with the virtual Uni-

versity of the Arctic. It joins English-speaking students from Canada, Alaska, Norway, Greenland, Russia and other Arctic regions.

"The idea is to familiarize students with the various circumpolar cultures, as well as the environment in which they live and the challenges of who they are throughout the world," Sable says. "You've got different government structures, cultural influences, and there are also shared environmental factors,

from the tundra way up to the barren grounds."

The resource-rich north has been in the news lately as an area of polarizing tensions between nations. Many occupants of the north, like Laplanders and the Inuit, have traditional homelands stretching beyond modern national boundaries. "If you look at it from prehistoric to historic times, you have to look at all those border issues that have grown up," Sable says. "Most of the

curriculum up in the north is southern, so this is a great way to transcend those barriers. I do a lot of work with the Innu First Nations in Labrador, and so I'm really aware of the huge amount of activity, from mining to development to forestry and so on.

"It's phenomenally beautiful," she says of the north. "You've got this tremendous, fragile ecological system that really needs to be protected. Of course, everybody's look-



Midnight sun reflects off the face of ridges on the west coast of Spitsbergen in Longyearbyen, Norway.

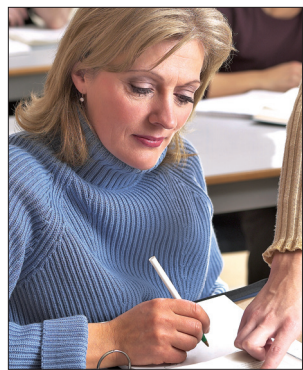
ing to it for gas and natural resources now, and that's scary."

Plans are currently afoot to create a northern university in Canada, as it is the only Arctic country

without one.

"It really is eye-opening to realize it's not this big blank space up there," Sable laughs. "It's amazing how much takes place up there."

Practical education for creative types looking to make a living



Arts students must learn how to market themselves to earn a decent paycheque.

JON TATTRIE
for Metro Canada



When Holly DeWolf graduated from arts college, she "fell right on her face." The Halifax woman's very expensive education developed her art, but not her business skills. That's why she's leading a course called the Business Side of Creativity at the Nova Scotia Community College.

"The business aspect (of art) is often left out," the

professional illustrator says. "Students leave and they're shaking their heads, wondering what they're supposed to be doing."

The continuing-education course teaches creative types how to promote and market themselves and how to work at home.

"It's a lot of juggling, especially if you have children," DeWolf says. On cue, her two-year-old pipes up in the background.

The class is divided into sections that cover the basics, like your elevator pitch to prospective clients. If you're serious about making a living from your creative work, you've got to act like a businessperson.

"If you're not in the business mode of thinking, you're going to be dead in the water," DeWolf says.

"I've lived it, and made lots of mistakes," she adds, laughing.

The class teaches cre-

ative types (artists, designers, illustrators, photographers and writers) how to learn their market value and how to get it; how to find and make niches for their work.

People idealize working from home, and DeWolf squashes that. "We think of our house as our personal space; when you bring an office into the house, it can turn it upside down."

The course shows how to organize your space so work is work and home is

home. Hot tip: Keep the TV out of your office to avoid the temptations of afternoon cartoons.

"But because we're creative, we get to twist it up a bit," she says. You can use your creativity in designing business cards and letterheads, which can be fun for you and a great ad for your work. "You're creative: Roll with it, but also be a business."

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Health



Have a helping of mighty capers

Having a steak or burger? Add a sprinkling of capers. An Italian study published in the *Journal of Agricultural and Food Chemistry* found that capers contain isothiocyanates, compounds that are thought to help protect against cancer. Capers, the pickled buds of a Mediterranean flower, are especially good for people whose meals are rich in fats and red meats, say researchers from the University of Palermo.

BEST HEALTH MAGAZINE

EDITOR: ANN-MARIE COLACINO, ANN-MARIE.COLACINO@METRONEWS.CA

Spreading tooth decay

Parents should be wary of bacteria in their mouths

CELIA MILNE
for Metro Canada

You may not realize it, but your mouth contains bacteria that can spread to your children and harm their teeth.

That is one of the messages in a new campaign recently launched by the Ontario Dental Association.

"Only nine per cent of the public realizes that tooth decay is an infectious illness," says Dr. Ian McConnachie, past-president of the Ontario Dental Association and a pediatric dentist in Nepean, Ont. "They don't realize it can spread from person to person or within the mouth."

Tooth decay is caused by bacteria. These germs don't exist in babies' mouths when they are born, but can be transmitted to them, "usually from mom," says Dr. McConnachie. For instance, before putting the soother in her baby's mouth, the mom licks it. Or she licks a spoon and then uses it to



Mothers can transmit germs that could lead to tooth decay by licking a spoon and then using it to feed her baby.

feed the baby. Once in the baby's mouth, the bacteria grow and eventually cause tooth decay.

"We are seeing tooth decay in children rising at a rapid rate," says McConnachie. Over the last 25 years, rates of tooth de-

cay in North America had been declining, but in the last five to 10 years, they have started to creep back up, he says. In some regions, more than half of kids have cavities by the age of five.

To prevent tooth decay,

Tips for parents

There are some measures parents should take to avoid tooth decay in children:

- If your baby sleeps with a sippy cup, fill it only with water.
- Look at your child's teeth. Watch for lines, spots or changes in colour, which could be signs of decay.
- Change your child's toothbrush every one to three months or after an illness.
- Do not share spoons, cups, food, toothbrushes.
- Do not lick your baby's soother.
- Help your child brush his/her teeth.

CELIA MILNE/
FOR METRO CANADA

children should begin seeing a dentist regularly before their first birthday, according to the ODA. Dental-health programs provided by the government should target preschool kids, says McConnachie, instead of waiting until children already have tooth problems.



A recent article argued for the need of a "date local" movement to reverse the carbon print caused by long-distance romance.

Environmentally friendly dating

The J Spot

Josey Vogels

Sex talk with Josey

This time of year tends to bring out our charitable side. And these days, it seems, one can do anything to raise money for a good cause. Even date.

The Vancity Bachelor has vowed to donate \$5,000 to a local charity in the name of the person who introduces him to his future wife. The Vancouver man, who wishes to remain publicly anonymous, is apparently a successful career man (he cites his devotion to his career as one of the reasons he is still single) who is ready to settle down and start a family. He frowns upon nightclubs and dating services as ways to meet the love of his life and instead is willing to enter into an e-mail correspondence (Vancitybachelor@gmail.com) with any interested parties to determine if there is enough of a connection to start dating.

Donating to charity isn't the only way one can date conscientiously. A recent article at Slate.com argued for the need to create a "date local" movement to reverse the carbon print caused by long-distance romance. Just as the local-food movement encourages us to eat only what is produced within a 100-mile-radius of our homes, the article encour-

aged people to start thinking in terms of "sex miles" (the distance someone travels to hook up with you) and date sustainably by becoming a "locasexual."

If you must date long distance, you can at least do what a friend of mine does when she travels to Dallas to see a guy she met online. When she books Air Canada, she pays \$6.40 for the airline's carbon footprint offset option. When she gets a better deal through another airline, she goes to zerofootprint.net and calculates what her carbon footprint is for her trip and then purchases offsets at the site's ZeroFootprint Carbon Shop.

But why stop at dating? You can also make your sex life more environmentally friendly.

Toronto-based sex shop Come As You Are (comeasyouare.com) favours manufacturers who provide fair wages for their workers and use manufacturing processes that have less negative environmental impact. They advise purchasing sex toys made of non-latex, phthalate-free silicone or elastomer, and to look for Canadian-made and organically sourced, preservative-free massage oils and lubricants.

Lastly, go animal free. Come As You Are sells Glyde, a vegan condom, as well as a line of vegan restraints and harnesses.

With a little conscious effort, dating and sex can feel good in a whole new way.

Josey Vogels is a sex and relationship columnist and author of five books on the subjects. For more info, visit joseyvogels.com.




'stylin! Congratulations to Winners at Bayers Lake

for being chosen Metro's Kooldest Place for Women's Fashions, as voted by Metro readers and Kool96.5 FM listeners. Tune in next month to find out the next category of the best Halifax has to Offer!








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Twilight sequel in the works

Actor Rob Pattinson has reportedly confirmed there will be a sequel to vampire love story Twilight, and he will star in the epic. Producers want to capitalize on Twilight's success by turning Meyer's second book, New Moon, into a followup film. IMDB.COM

Entertainment



No Doubt tour

No Doubt (front woman Gwen Stefani, left) is getting back together for a tour in 2009 as the band puts the finishing touches on its first studio album in seven years. [BBC NEWS ONLINE](http://BBCNEWS.ONLINE)

EDITOR: TINA COSTANZA, TINA.COSTANZA@METRONEWS.CA

Woman in red

U.S. political shift has Ani DiFranco smiling

ROB MCMAHON
for Metro Canada



For Ani DiFranco — and as she describes it, much of New Orleans — it's been a Red Letter Year.

DiFranco, who's just released an album of that name and moved to the Big Easy, described neighbours congregating on streets and popping champagne bottles after the recent presidential election.

"There's this incredible feeling, people are so full of joy and hope ... I tear up when I think about it," said DiFranco.

The political situation is just one reason the eclectic punk-folk artist is grinning. She's now a mother,

with little Petah Lucia serving as a muse. Her partner and co-producer Mike Napolitano adds new layers to her poetic lyrics and rhythmic compositions, bringing in instruments like a vibraphone and marimba, and committing what DiFranco jokingly calls the "blasphemy of blasphemies" — muting the guitar on beat-heavy tracks like Smiling Under.

While DiFranco is no stranger to creative conflict — an esthetic reflected in her resolutely DIY ethos, her trademark slap-strum guitar and her willingness to self-reflexively tackle political issues in her lyrics — this year finds her a lot more chilled-out. From the mellow dedica-

tion to her daughter Present/Infant to the raucous, horn-heavy closer Red Letter Year Reprise, DiFranco sounds happy. Could be the gumbo: She described New Orleans as vibrantly alive, despite ongoing lackadaisical government response to the devastation of Hurricane Katrina.

"A lot of people are rebuilding by pulling themselves up with their own bootstraps, and in a lot of areas of town — the most devastated areas — nothing has improved."

That said, DiFranco remains an optimistic activist, and not just politically. New distribution tools like the Internet help independent musicians, but accompany an explo-



Red Letter Year is the latest CD from Grammy-winner Ani DiFranco.

sion of touring bands that can no longer rely on record sales, leading to more competition for venue space. But the self-described tour warrior welcomes the challenge — and the chance to continue building community

through music.

"There's nothing that approximates the experience of having hope and getting together with people and experiencing each other — hearing live music for real. That's how I built my career."

Fielder-Civil loses appeal



Fielder-Civil

PEOPLE The husband of British soul singer Amy Winehouse lost a High Court appeal yesterday against a 27-month jail sentence for attacking a pub landlord in 2006 and then trying to cover it up. Blake Fielder-Civil's legal challenge was rejected by the Court of Appeal in London.

"I am disappointed, but not really surprised," he said after the hearing.

Fielder-Civil was released on parole last month after spending around a year in prison on condition he checked into a drug rehabilitation centre. He was sentenced in July after he spent nine months behind bars awaiting trial. REUTERS

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Making amends, Intellevision style

Intellevision

Rick McGinnis

rick.mcginis@metronews.ca

DON'T SHOOT THE MESSENGER: Yesterday's column on CTV's recent woes ended up feeling like an argument at a dinner party, right down to the hurt feelings and regrets, and the half-hearted apology the next day after the wine hangover wore off.

An e-mail from the network is prompting the latter though, like the dinner party fracas, it probably won't satisfy everyone.

Susanne Boyce is CTV's president, creative, content and channels; Suzanne Boyd is the one-time editor of Flare, the fashion magazine. Writing in haste made me confuse one with the other, which gives you some idea of the

mnemonic wasteland that too many years in the media can leave in their wake — mea culpa.

And the reason that three recently cancelled ABC shows (Eli Stone, Pushing Daisies, Dirty Sexy Money) don't show up on CTV's website is because they were on A Channel, the network's kid sister channel in the CTVGlobe-media family tree.

The e-mail pointed out that CTV's main competition, Global, has been suffering more from cancelled U.S. series (My Own Worst Enemy, The Ex List) and underperforming one-time hits (Heroes, Prison Break). Which is true, but it doesn't diminish the undeniable fact that network prime time is experiencing an annus horribilis, just after a couple of consecutive annus bringdowns, and as a prelude to what looks like an annus crap-tacular.

CTV still retains its No. 1 status, but as a recent Vari-

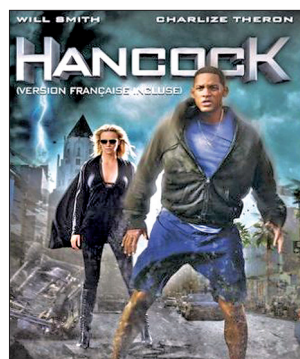
ety article pointed out, total viewership in Canada is down, and the network is sharing the 18-to-24 demographic neatly with Global, the competition, which still has House and Survivor.

CTV will probably keep the upper hand thanks to So You Think You Can Dance and Canadian Idol in its U.S. and Canadian iterations, but this is the only sort of TV where you can rely on strong, easily measurable morning-after ratings: Shows that play "live," instead of encouraging difficult-to-measure delayed DVR viewing or streaming views on network websites.

Another recent Variety article paints an even bleaker picture, comparing the networks to the Big Three auto manufacturers, finally reaping the whirlwind of a downturn everyone saw coming.

Rick McGinnis writes about music, movies, books and television, but not opera.

DVD picks



Hancock

Director: **Peter Burg**
 Rating: **PG-13**

ROUSED from his alcoholic stupor to stop a high-speed chase on a Los Angeles freeway, grumpy superhero John Hancock (Will Smith) causes nearly \$10 million in property damage. The city's gratitude is muted by complaints that his cure for crime could push L.A. into penury. Thanks for nothing, man!

All of which makes Hancock one of the most realistic and stimulating superhero movies in a long while, until it slams into a brick wall about an hour into its 92-minute run.

Hancock, who is like Superman with bad manners and a major attitude, isn't the least bit contrite or polite. But things change after Hancock saves public relations image-maker Ray Embrey

(Jason Bateman) from a fatal collision with a train. Ray sees Hancock as a rough gem in need of some polishing, which he intends to provide.

Hancock is still worth seeing, if only for a glimpse of what might have been a truly innovative idea. As it is, the movie is as rough around the edges as Will Smith's ham-fisted hero.

Available in various digital denominations, with extras that include an extended director's cut, and behind-the-scenes looks at the stuntwork and CGI wizardry.

Fred Clause

Director: **David Dobkin**
 Rating: **PG**

"YOU can't a-fool a-me!" Chico Marx once told brother Groucho, comically and contractually speaking. "There ain't no sanity clause!"

Yes, but sadly there is Fred Claus, a holiday movie letdown similarly lacking in logic. It senselessly dims an idea that should shine as brightly as Rudolph's nose.

It's the high-concept joke about what might happen if Santa Claus (Paul Giamatti) had a troublesome older brother named Fred (Vince Vaughn) who

resented his younger sibling's success, happiness and maternal devotion.

Vaughn immediately demonstrates why he's all wrong for a role in a movie aimed at kids. Working as a Chicago repo man, repossessing a young girl's TV set, he launches into a machine-gun volley of verbiage. Kevin Spacey also chews the pine cones in his villainous role.

Then there's the ham-fisted direction of David Dobkin (Wedding Crashers) and knuckle-dragging humour of screenwriter Dan Fogelman (Cars). Far from being a new Christmas classic, this is a tale you'll never want to hear told again.

The highly unnecessary extras include a director's commentary and 25 minutes of additional scenes.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

GlobalStyle

Kenya Hunt

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THIS HOLIDAY, BRING HOME THE FAMILY FUN!

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— Jeffrey Lyons, "REEL TALK"/NBC TV

VINCE VAUGHN PAUL GIAMATTI

FRED CLAUS

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PAUSE FOR CLAUS: ELVES TELL ALL

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 WRITTEN BY JESSIE NELSON AND DAN FOGELMAN SCREENPLAY BY DAN FOGELMAN DIRECTED BY JOEL SILVER JESSIE NELSON DAVID DOBKIN DIRECTED BY DAVID DOBKIN

fredclaus.net warnervideo.com wbhighdef.ca



Seagal the police officer

Action star Steven Seagal is to take part in a new reality series which will chronicle his little-known role as a police officer in Louisiana. Seagal has been a fully commissioned deputy at the state's Jefferson Parish Sheriff's Office for the last 20 years. [IMDB.COM](#)



Tony Award-winning Hairspray coming to Halifax

MUSICAL The Tony Award winning musical Hairspray is coming to the Halifax Metro Centre for two shows on Wednesday, April 1, and Thursday, April 2 at 7:30 p.m.

The Broadway musical comedy which inspired a major motion picture features catchy songs, laughter and romance, all based in Baltimore in the 1960s.

Tickets for both performances go on sale this Friday at 11 a.m. with tickets ranging from \$47.50 to \$72. Tickets can be purchased at all Ticket Atlantic locations, by phone at 451-1221 or online at [ticketatlantic.com](#).

Great Big Sea to play at Metro Centre

CONCERT Great Big Sea is returning to the Halifax Metro Centre for a show with Spirit of the West on Thursday, March 12, at 8 p.m.

The Newfoundland-based Juno-nominated band will be touring in support of its ninth studio release and gold-selling record Fortune's Favour, which hit store shelves in June.

Tickets are \$46 and \$61 and go on sale Friday at 9 a.m.

Tickets can be purchased at all Ticket Atlantic locations, by phone at 451-1221 or online at [ticketatlantic.com](#) or [sonicconcerts.com](#).

METRO HALIFAX

In brief

THEATRE Neptune Theatre's Young Company Tour is performing two shows this Sunday at Neptune's Studio Theatre. Emil Sher's Bluenose will be shown at 1 p.m., followed by Brainstorm at 3 p.m. Tickets are \$13.50 and \$10. Call 429-7070.

METRO HALIFAX



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Citifying a country boy

Idol runner-up Bixby is getting used to life in the music spotlight

PHILIP CROUCHER

philip.croucher@metronews.ca



He's a small-town boy adjusting to big-city life.

And sometimes, former Canadian Idol star Jaydee Bixby needs a take a few seconds to rant about it.

"Between you and me, man, I think the ambulance drivers have it in for me," the talkative 18-year-old said half-jokingly in a recent phone interview from his downtown Vancouver apartment.

"Like in the middle of the night, they're always like, 'OK, Jaydee is sleeping, so lets turn the sirens on down right by his place.'"

Such is the life now for Bixby, who in the course of 18 months has gone from musical unknown living with his family in Drumheller, Alta., to an up-and-coming Canadian country music star making real waves with his debut CD.

If you go

- WHAT: Jaydee Bixby
- WHEN: Tomorrow at 7:30 p.m.
- WHERE: Halifax Grammar School
- TICKETS: Cost \$25 in advance and \$30 day of show. Tickets are available at all Ticktpro outlets, by phone at 1-866-908-9090 or online at [sonicconcerts.com](#).

The 2007 Canadian Idol runner-up released his first record in July titled Cowboys and Cadillacs, which since hitting store shelves has sold more units than any other Canadian country album and even debuted at No. 1 on the Soundscan country charts.

The record features mostly new material, including the hit-single Old Fashioned Girl.

"I wanted songs that when people came to my show, they could be like,



Jaydee Bixby's debut album Cowboys and Cadillacs at No. 1 on the Soundscan country charts.

"He's done this. He's been through this," said Bixby, who has two co-writes on the 12-track album.

"A lot of songs talk about your kids and how fast they're growing up — I don't think I could pull that off no matter how well I sung the song. So I made sure all the songs on

my album are things that I can relate to and stuff that I've gone through personally in life."

With a strong, powerful voice and great stage presence, the future certainly looks bright for Bixby, who is performing tomorrow at Halifax Grammar School at 7:30 p.m.

But whatever success lies ahead, Bixby plans to remain small-town at heart.

In fact, his mother recently spent a week with him at his Vancouver apartment and showered him with attention — and food.

"I've got a full fridge now," he said laughing. "That's always good."

critics' corner

The Border

The government involved in drug smuggling? Say it ain't so! In this new episode, cheap heroin from Afghanistan is being smuggled into the country, and Kessler (James McGowan) strongly suspects the Canadian military is playing a role in covering up the operation. Sofia Milos, Nazneen Contractor, Mark Wilson and Catherine Disher also star in "Good Intentions." 9 PM on CBC



Faerie Queen

If you've sat through "The Nutcracker" without being bored to tears, you might be ready for this enjoyable production from 2003, choreographed by John Alleyne and performed by Ballet British Columbia. Based on Shakespeare's "A Midsummer Night's Dream," it's an exuberant, whimsical tale of love, mischief and magic. 9 PM on BRVO

Monty Python's The Meaning of Life

It's Monty Python. What does that mean? Lowbrow humor for highbrow intelligence. This 1983 film tries — although not very hard — to find, well, the meaning of life. Considering life includes conception and death, expect some rather crude references and a scene that — well, let's just say if vomit makes you squeamish, you should keep the remote handy. 10 PM on PIX

HA	H	D	B	7:00	7:30	8:00	8:30	9:00	9:30	10:00	10:30	11:00
11/24/08	31	31	31	ABC	News (N)	ABC Wild News	Inside Edition	Chronicle	Dancing With the Stars		Samantha Who	Boston Legal
	7	7	7	ASN	The Road to Avonlea		Instant Star	TMZ (N)	Sarah Connor Chronicles	Two/Half Men	Samantha Who	The Mentalist
	11	11	11	CBC	Coronation St.	Jeopardy! (N)	Dragon's Den (N)		The Border (HDTV) (N)	CBC News: The National		The Hour
	2	2	2	CBC-F	Terre humaine	Pyramide (SC)	Virginie (SC)	La Petite vie	L'Auberge du chien noir (SC)	Hauts		Le Téléjournal
	32	32	32	CBS	News (N)	Evening News	The Insider (N)	Entertainment	Big Bang Th	How I Met	Two/Half Men	Worst Week
	69	69	69	CFTM	TVA 18 heures	Le Cercle (SC)	Les Auditions de Star Acadé		Annie et ses hommes (N) (SC)	Dr. House "Le Petit coin" (SC)		TVA 22 heures
	6	6	6	CHFH	Entertainment	ET Canada	Prison Break "Selfless"		My Own Worst Enemy	Heroes (HDTV) (N)		News (N)
	9	9	9	CJCH	etalk	Hollywood	CSI: Miami "Power Trip"		Dancing With the Stars		Corner Gas (N)	News (N)
	10	10	10	ELTV	EastLink Mag.	Fishing	Harv's Sportsland (Live)		Build It	Harv's Sportsland	EastLink Television	
	36	36	36	FOX	Deal-No Deal	The Simpsons	Two/Half Men	Two/Half Men	Sarah Connor Chronicles		Prison Break "Selfless"	Fox First
primetime	12	12	12	NBC	News (N)	NBC News	Hollywood	Extra (N)	Chuck (HDTV) (N)		Heroes (HDTV) (N)	Worst Enemy
	29	29	29	NW	World News	Business	CBC News	Newman	The Hour		CBC News: The National	Stolen Babies
	4	4	4	PBS-B	NewsHour With Jim Lehrer		Greater Boston	Chronicles	Antiques Roadshow		The Rape of Europa (2006, Documentary)	
	35	35	35	PBS-D	NewsHour With Jim Lehrer		Business Rpt.	Worldfocus	Antiques Roadshow		The Rape of Europa (2006, Documentary)	
	68	68	68	TQS	(6:30) Le Retour (SC)		C't'une joke	Loft Story	CSI: NY (SC)		Bob Gratten	Les Voisines
	23	96	96	BNN	Business News	Headline	Market Call	Berman's Call	Money Talks	Business News	Squeeze Play	Market Call
	18	18	18	CNN	(5) The Situation Room		Lou Dobbs Tonight		Campbell Brown: No Bias		Larry King Live	Cooper 360
	54	54	54	GOLF	Legends of Golf (N)		Jebel Ali Challenge Highlights	School of Golf	Golf Central		PGA Championship Highlights	The Turn
	52	52	52	RSE	Prime Time Sports		Hockey 2008 ADT Canada Russia Challenge -- OHL vs. Russia. From St. Catharines, Ont.					Sportsnet Con.
	55	55	55	SCOR	Hockey Talk	Game On	RaceNight				(10:15) WWE Monday Night Raw	
news	45	45	45	SPD	Unique Whips		Pinks	Pass Time	SuperCars	SuperCars	My Classic Car	My Classic Car
	53	53	53	TSN	Off the Record	SportsCentre	That's Hockey!	Monday Night Countdown	Corner Gas	NFL Football	Green Bay Packers at New Orleans Saints.	Auctions
	43	43	43	FAM	Zoeys 101	Life Derek	Wizards-Place	That's-Raven	Zack & Cody	Natural-Sadie	Han. Montana	Life Derek
	44	44	44	TOON	6teen (DVS)	Total Drama	George-Jungle	Bugs Bunny & Tweety Show	Wayside	Johnny Test	Futurama	American Dad
	26	26	26	TREE	Max & Ruby	Backyardigans	The Wonder	Nght Grdn	Friend Rabbit	Franklin	Little Bear	Miss Spider
	27	27	27	YTV	Drake & Josh	iCarly	Malcolm-Mid.	Home Improve.	Malcolm-Mid.	Fresh Prince	Futurama	Prank Patrol
	16	16	16	A&E	Cold Case Files		CSI: Miami (HDTV)		Intervention "Ashley"		Intervention (HDTV)	The First 48
	70	70	70	APTN	News		Notre Peuple "Le train"		La Cité		Mishkuenita	Le Vent Sombre ** (1991, Crime Drama)
	50	50	50	BET	106 & Park: BET's Top 10 Live			Baby Boy *** (2001, Drama)	Tyrese Gibson, Omar Gooding.			Keyshia Cole
	37	37	37	BRVO	Street Legal		Desperate Housewives		Faerie Queen		Bravonews	Year of Lion
sports	25	25	25	CMT	Dedicated (N)		All About ...	Flashback	Home Improve.	Home Improve.	Reba	Reba
	49	49	49	COM	Laughs	Comedy Now	Air Farce	Just for Laughs	Corner Gas		The Simpsons	South Park
	153	153	153	COURT	W-FIVE		The Investigators		Cops Uncut	Dumb Criminal	Legal Briefs	Investigators
	38	38	38	DISC	Destroyed	Destroyed	Daily Planet (N)		MythBusters		Dirty Jobs	Worst Driver
	34	48	48	HGTV	Holmes on Homes		House Hunters	Property Virgin	My First Place	Home to Stay	Property Virgin	Marriage
	46	46	46	HIST	Underworld Histories		NCIS "Pop Life"		Battle 360		Underworld Histories	Income Prop.
	17	17	17	MM	Video on Trial	Video on Trial	Punk'd	Punk'd	Pimp My Ride	Pimp My Ride	50 Cent: Money and Power	MuchNews
	19	19	19	MMM	MusicProfile	mmmtop10.com		Revival	Listed		Coolio's Rules	Parental Advis.
	201	201	201	M1	(6:15) Blades of Glory		Sanctuary "Edward"		Star Trek (Part 2 of 2)		Cooffication	Little Britain
	48	23	23	OLN	The Amazing Race 5				The Academy		Mantracker	Departures
family	51	51	51	PEACH	Seinfeld	Friends	House-Payne	House-Payne	Selena *** (1997, Biography)	Jennifer Lopez, Edward James Olmos.		
	206	206	206	PIX	(6:40) Best of the Best (1989, Action)			Black Pearls * (1990, Drama)			Monty Python's The Meaning of Life	
	67	67	67	RDI	RDI en direct	RDI en direct	24 Heures en 60 minutes		Grands reportages Haiti. (SC)		Le Téléjournal (SC)	RDI en direct
	39	39	39	SHOW	Prime Suspect 6: Last Witness		Love-Death	Love-Death	Painkiller Jane		Kenny-Spenney	Rent-A-Goalie
	40	40	40	SLICE	Matchmaker	Til Debt-Part	End of Leash	ET Canada	Til Debt-Part	Newlywed	Beautiful	Party Mamas
	47	47	47	SPACE	Stargate SG-1		Lost "Two for the Road"		Star Trek (Part 2 of 2)		Battlestar Galactica	Eureka
	14	14	14	SPIKE	(6) Star Wars: Episode I -- The Phantom Menace (1999)				Star Wars: Episode II -- Attack of the		Clones ** (2002, Science Fiction)	
	57	98	98	STAR	FashionTele	Look-A-Like	The Ellen DeGeneres Show		TMZ (N)	etalk	Scream Queens	Tonight Show
	21	21	21	TLC	What Not to Wear		Little People	Little People	Little People	Little People	Jon & Kate	Jon & Kate
	56	34	34	TROP	News Show	News Show	TV Made, Do It	Very Bad Men		What Happen?	Make or Break	TV Made, Do It
cable variety	20	20	20	TV5	Que.-champion	Journal de Fr2	Toute une histoire		Pharaons pour l'éternité (SC)		Jardins	Partir autre
	28	28	28	V	Just Cause		Murder, She Wrote		Prime Minister	May-December	McLeod's Daughters (N)	Tuscany
	60	97	97	VIVA	Mysterious Ways		Judging Amy		Commander In Chief		The West Wing	Truth, Duty
	22	22	22	W	House	Style by Jury	Will & Grace	Friends	How Clean	House	Love It or List It (N)	Confidential
	251	251	251	WGN	Be-Millionaire	Evening News	Two/Half Men	Family Guy	One Tree Hill (HDTV)		One Tree Hill (HDTV) (N)	WGN News



Tyra Banks is facing a raft of cuts to her daily show, as U.S. networks feel the pinch of the global economic downturn. The Tyra Banks Show is to move to the CW network's afternoon slot and will see the production schedule cut to reduce costs. **IMDB.COM**

Celebrity Buzz

Jolie pleased to be aging

BEAUTY Angelina Jolie only started to be happy with the way she looked when she became a mother because it gave her face more character, **imdb.com** reports.

The actress and her partner Brad Pitt have adopted Maddox, 7, Pax, 4, and Zahara, 3, and biological children Shiloh, 2, and baby twins Knox and Vivienne.

And it was only when she welcomed the twins that Jolie began

to appreciate her appearance.

"I know this is going to sound corny, but I first became happy with the way I look when I became a mother. There's this

idea that beauty is when someone does your hair and puts a lot of makeup on you and sticks your face on the cover of a magazine. Is that beauty?" she tells Britain's *You* magazine. Jolie is

pleased she is getting older, because she is looking more like her late mother, Marcheline Bertrand, who died last year from cancer.

"You know what is beautiful? My mom. She was beautiful to me, and I look more like my mom as I get older," Jolie adds. "Something else comes out of you when you become a parent and, as you get older, you start to see more character in your face. Now, when I look at myself, I just see somebody at peace, and I see a mom, and I see my own relatives in my face — and that's a kind of beauty that exists for everybody and doesn't disappear."

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Madonna trying to coax Spears back

RELIGION Madonna has offered Britney Spears full use of her New York home in a bid to tempt her back into her Kabbalah religion, according to reports.

The pop star is allegedly keen to get Spears back into studying the ancient faith, an off-shoot of Judaism, **femalefirst.co.uk** reports. Spears reportedly turned her back on Kabbalah after giving birth to second son Jayden James in 2006, when she declared, "I no longer study Kabbalah. My baby is my religion."

A source tells Britain's *The Mail* on Sunday, "Madonna is determined she can get Britney back into Kabbalah. She has offered her a suite of rooms at her apartment

in New York and has told Britney she is her surrogate mother. Britney used to wear the red Kabbalah bracelet and read the books Madonna gave her and she is thinking about giving it another chance."

A spokesman for Spears has refused to dismiss the reports, saying, "Britney wouldn't really comment on that, it's just a case of wait and see what happens."

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Fox doesn't think of herself as foxy

BEAUTY Transformers star Megan Fox, 22, was recently voted Sexiest Woman in the World by FHM magazine. But she is unconvinced by the praise. "I don't think I'm a sexy, beautiful woman," Fox

tells GQ magazine. "I look like Ted Nugent in a black wig."

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Wood moves on to Gordon-Levitt?

RELATIONSHIPS Actress Evan Rachel Wood has sparked reports she's moved on from her romance with rocker Marilyn Manson after she was spotted in the arms of actor Joseph Gordon-Levitt in Los Angeles, **imdb.com** reports.

Wood and Gordon-Levitt appeared together recently at the

Hamilton Behind the Camera Awards. According to the *National Enquirer*, Wood has ignited a new love affair.

"This thing with Joseph has come out of nowhere," a source says. "They've taken everyone by surprise." Manson, 39, and Wood, 21, began dating in December 2006. They announced their breakup earlier this month.

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Stewart putting school on hold

EDUCATION Actress Kristen Stewart has put her dreams of attending a prestigious American university on hold because she has "an authority issue," **imdb.com** reports.

The 18-year-old *Twilight* star has yet to finish her high school studies, since her acting career has skyrocketed with attention from the new vampire film.

"It's sort of embarrassing but I'm finishing my last year of high school," she says. "It's been a bit of a rough road. I'm entirely self-indulgent and I put things off so I just took a little longer but it's OK. I have a bit of an authority issue. I've grown up saying, yes, I'm going to get to an Ivy League (private university). I definitely have a future in academics, it's just not a really conventional one. I don't know what happened but I'm going to do my own thing for a while."

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Paltrow nets six-figure paycheck

SPOKESPERSON Actress Gwyneth Paltrow has scooped a six-figure paycheck after signing on as the spokesperson for American Express credit cards, **imdb.com** reports.

Paltrow will feature in a series of new advertisements to promote the financial firm, adding to her portfolio as the face of cosmetics giant Estee Lauder and fashion house Tod's.

The exact sum of money Paltrow will receive for the promotion has not been disclosed.

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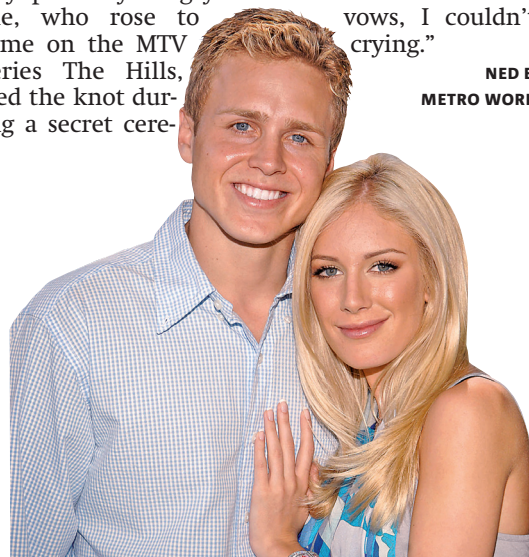


Heidi, Spencer elope

WEDDING Reality TV stars Heidi Montag and Spencer Pratt have eloped. The usually publicity-hungry couple, who rose to fame on the MTV series *The Hills*, tied the knot during a secret cere-

mony in Mexico. Montag confirmed the news to **PerezHilton.com**, saying, "The minute we said our vows, I couldn't stop crying."

NED EHRBAR/METRO WORLD NEWS



GETTY IMAGES PHOTOS

Hudson's shoe addiction

FASHION Kate Hudson owns "more than 400 pairs of shoes," **femalefirst.co.uk** reports.

The actress reportedly finds it difficult to restrain herself when she sees footwear she wants to buy and consequently has a wardrobe full of pumps.

"I'm a total shopaholic! I've tried to stop, but I love clothes

and fashion way too much! I probably own more than 400 pairs of shoes. That's a lot, isn't it?" Hudson says.

Hudson, who has a four-year-old son, Ryder, with ex-husband Chris Robinson, also revealed she thinks it is unfair when people think a woman's sexiness departs when she becomes a mother.

"Hey, single moms can still be sexy!" she adds. "You just do the best you can. I think any mother, working or not, should take a little time out every day to be themselves."

METRO NEWS SERVICES



Moss fuming after cancellation

GOSSIP Supermodel Kate Moss was left fuming this past week after flying in to New York for a modelling job — only to discover the shoot had been cancelled at the last minute, **imdb.com** reports.

Moss arrived at JFK airport last week when she

was told the job for fashion monthly *W* magazine had been scrapped. "She wasn't very happy at all," a source says.

W magazine editors were reportedly charged with the \$11,840 US bill for Moss' first-class flights.

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